

### **3 VERULAM BUILDINGS**

#### **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

1. 3 Verulam Buildings (3VB) aims to provide a first-class service which meets our clients' expectations at all times. If you are not satisfied with any aspect of the service you receive, we would ask you first to contact our Senior Practice Manager, Steve Penson, or Chambers Director, Stewart Thompson, by telephoning +44 (0)20 7831 8441.
2. If you wish to make a complaint, you are invited to let us know about it as soon as possible and to follow the procedure given below.
3. If you are unhappy with the outcome of our investigation, alternative dispute resolution may be available to you. You may also be able to take up your complaint with the Legal Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is usually only able to consider your complaint when it has first been investigated by Chambers. The Legal Ombudsman can be contacted through the website at [www.legalombudsman.org.uk](http://www.legalombudsman.org.uk)
4. The Bar Standards Board (BSB) regulates barristers and specialised legal services businesses in England and Wales. Their website contains a Register which displays details of all barristers who are authorised to practise in England and Wales and who have a current practising certificate. The register will display the dates for which a barrister's practising certificate is valid. It includes information about barristers' practising status, their practising address, the reserved legal activities they are authorised to undertake and whether they have been the subject of any disciplinary findings which are published on the BSB website in accordance with their current policy. It can be found by clicking [here](#).

#### **Contact the barrister concerned**

5. We would invite you, in the first place, to contact the barrister concerned, whether by telephone or in writing. He or she (hereafter "he") will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like to be done about it. He will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. If the matter is resolved he will record the outcome, check that you are satisfied with the outcome and record that you are satisfied. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing.
6. We would expect him to deal with your complaint within 10 working days, or, if that timescale proves impracticable for whatever reason, to tell you why and thereafter to keep you informed of progress.
7. If you remain dissatisfied, or if you would prefer not to contact the barrister direct, or if the complaint concerns a member of staff, then we would invite you to pursue the matter further as follows.

#### **Complaints made by telephone**

8. You may wish to make a complaint in writing and, if so, please follow the procedure in paragraph 9 below. However, if you would rather speak on the telephone about your complaint then please telephone the Senior Practice Manager, Stephen Penson, on 020 7831 8441. If the complaint is about the Senior Practice Manager, please telephone the Chambers Director, Stewart Thompson, on 020 7831 8441.
9. The person you contact will make a note of the details of your complaint and what you would like to be done about it. He will discuss your concerns with you and aim to resolve them. If the matter

is resolved he will record the outcome, check that you are satisfied with the outcome and record that you are satisfied. You may also wish to record the outcome of the telephone discussion in writing.

10. If your complaint is not resolved on the telephone, you will be invited to write to us about it within the next 14 days so it can be investigated formally.

### **Complaints made in writing**

11. If you wish to make a complaint in writing, please give the following details:

your name and address;

the name of the barrister(s) or staff member(s) you are complaining about;

the detail of the complaint, including dates where appropriate;

and what outcome you are seeking from your complaint.

Please address your letter to:

Stewart Thompson  
Chambers Director  
3 Verulam Buildings  
Gray's Inn  
London WC1R 5NT

or email: [sthompson@3VB.com](mailto:sthompson@3VB.com)

12. The Chambers Director will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working days.
13. Our Joint Heads of Chambers and the Chambers Director are responsible for the handling and monitoring of complaints. Chambers has established a panel, led by the Joint Heads of Chambers and the Chambers Director and consisting of Chambers' Queen's Counsel, for the purposes of investigating complaints. A member of this panel will be appointed to investigate your complaint. The person or persons about whom you are complaining will not be involved in the investigation of your complaint.
14. The person conducting the investigation, or the Chambers Director on his behalf, will write to you within ten working days of the receipt of your complaint to inform you that he has been appointed and that he will provide a written report of his investigation. He may also seek further information or documents from you to assist his investigation. The investigator will tell you the date by which he intends to have sent you his report. If it subsequently transpires that this timescale cannot be met, he will inform you of the reasons for the delay and set a new date. We believe it is in everyone's interest for a complaint to be investigated as soon as possible and we aim to respond fully within four weeks of receipt of your complaint. In any case, we are obliged by the Bar's regulatory body to respond within eight weeks of receipt.
15. The investigator will contact the person(s) about whom you have complained and anyone else the investigator identifies as relevant to the investigation. If appropriate, you will be given the opportunity to make further representations in writing during the investigation.
16. The investigator's report will set out:
  - the nature and scope of his investigations;
  - his conclusion on each complaint and the basis for his conclusion;
  - and, if he finds that you are justified in your complaint, his proposals for resolving the complaint.

### **Taking the complaint further**

17. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of our investigation, you have the right to complain to the Legal Ombudsman, the independent body set up to resolve complaints about legal services. The Legal Ombudsman will not start investigating a complaint until after we have investigated it and provided you with our report. We will provide you with the contact details of the Legal Ombudsman when we send you our report, in case you require them:

email: [enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk)  
phone: 0300 555 0333  
Post: Legal Ombudsman  
PO Box 6806  
Wolverhampton  
WV1 9WJ

### **Timescales for complaints**

18. The Legal Ombudsman sets conditions for the investigation of complaints relating to when the problem occurred and when you found out about it. They will ordinarily investigate a complaint if all three of the following conditions are met:

The problem, or when you found out about it, happened after 5 October 2010; **and**

You are referring your complaint to the Legal Ombudsman within either of the following:

six years of the problem happening; **or**

three years from when you found out about it; **and**

You are referring your complaint to them within six months of our final response.

19. A copy of the Legal Ombudsman's Scheme Rules can be found by clicking [here](#).
20. We conform to the same timescales, so will investigate any complaint within six years of the problem happening or within three years of your finding out about it. Of course, the investigation of a complaint and reaching a satisfactory resolution are likely to be helped by being dealt with at the earliest opportunity.
21. The Office for Legal Complaints is empowered to publish information on Ombudsman decisions on the Legal Ombudsman's website by the Legal Services Act 2007. The information published is a simple and transparent record of decisions made by the Legal Ombudsman in the previous 12 months and can be found by clicking [here](#).

### **Confidentiality**

22. All conversations and documents relating to your complaint will be treated as confidential and will be disclosed only to the extent that is necessary. Disclosure will only be to the Head of Chambers, the Chambers Director, the person appointed to investigate the complaint and those specifically involved in the complaint and its investigation. All documents and correspondence generated by the complaint will be retained for a period of 6 years, after which it will be securely destroyed.

### **Record-keeping**

23. As part of our commitment to client care we will make a written record of any complaint and its investigation. This record will be treated as confidential. We will use any such records to assist us in our regular reviews of the services we provide.

### **Complaints about a barrister who was not acting for you**

24. If you have a complaint about the professional conduct of a barrister at 3VB who was not acting for you when the problem arose (that is, you are not or were not a client of ours), we hope that you will still contact our Senior Practice Manager, Steve Penson, or Chambers Director, Stewart Thompson, by telephoning +44 (0)20 7831 8441.
25. You may also contact directly the Bar Standards Board (BSB), the Bar's regulatory body. It is important that you contact the BSB within twelve months of the problem arising. If you do not make your complaint within twelve months, the BSB may not be able to act unless there is a good reason. You may contact the BSB:

by phone: 020 7611 1444

by fax: 020 7831 9217

by email: [assessmentcomplaints@barstandardsboard.org.uk](mailto:assessmentcomplaints@barstandardsboard.org.uk)

through their website: [www.barstandardsboard.org.uk](http://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk)

by post: 289-293 High Holborn, London, WC1V 7HZ